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SUBJECT: CODEL PRICE: HDAC INAUGURATES RELATIONSHIP WITH  
PERU'S CONGRESS

REF: LIMA 1114

11. (U) Summary: The August 15-19 visit to Peru of Codel Price -- representing the House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC) -- inaugurated formal legislative to legislative relations between the U.S. and Peruvian Congresses. Codel discussions focused on four topics: representation (constituent relations); Congress's oversight; legislative research and analysis; and information technology. Follow-on activities will include Peruvian Congress and staff training in Washington, possible future visits to Peru by staff or former members of Congress, and ongoing exchanges of information. HDAC Chairman Price and his colleagues underscored the importance of the legislative branch in representing political constituencies, forging solutions to social challenges and expanding the reach of democracy -- strongly reinforcing the USG's top policy priority in Peru. End Summary.

12. (U) The U.S. House Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC) Codel members visited Peru from August 15-19. Participating were HDAC Chairman David Price (D -North Carolina), Ranking Republican David Dreier (R-CA), Jim McDermott (D-WA), Lois Capps (D -CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Sam Farr (D-CA), Ed Whitfield (R-KY) and Brian Bilbray (R-CA). In addition to formally initiating Congress-to-Congress ties, delegation members visited Arequipa and the regional office of PPC Congressman Juan Carlos Eguren, met with President Garcia and PM Velazquez Quesquen (septel), and engaged in peer-to-peer discussions on a range of topics with their congressional counterparts. Staff-level discussions took place in parallel.

13. (U) Led by Congressman Price, HDAC's visit to Peru inaugurated official ties between the U.S. House of Representatives and Peru's Congress. Peru's inclusion as an HDAC country sprang from a number of sources, including the Peruvian Congressional leadership's interest in addressing some of the legislature's institutional weaknesses and reversing its low approval ratings. During an August 2008 courtesy call with the Ambassador, then-President of Congress (and current PM) Velazquez Quesquen requested U.S. insitutional support and subsequently created a special congressional "modernization" group to carry the effort forward. In February of this year, HDAC staff members visited Peru to assess the merits of establishing a formal relationship. This assessment resulted in Peru's being selected as an HDAC partner and in identifying key areas of potential cooperation. Codel Price's inaugural visit

culminated in the signing of a framework agreement between the two legislatures that provides for the exchange of information; knowledge sharing and consultations; and training programs for members and staff.

#### Peer to Peer Exchanges

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¶4. (U) Codel Price focused on four topics: representation and constituent relations; the oversight role of congress; legislative research and analysis; and information technology. The visit began in Arequipa, Peru's second largest city and the informal capital of the southern highlands. Codel Price visited the district office of Congressman Juan Carlos Eguren in Arequipa, one of the most advanced in Peru in terms of its mechanisms and procedures for constituent outreach. (Eguren's office has received some technical assistance from the International Republican Institute in the context of USAID's political party strengthening program.) U.S. members asked about the structural challenges associated with providing constituent services in large, multi-member congressional districts, and their Peruvian counterparts allowed that in some cases it was next to impossible. (Lima, for example, has 35 congress people representing almost 10 million people at large.) In Congress, the U.S. members held well-attended peer-to-peer sessions with Peruvian members to discuss best practices in constituent relations and outreach; Congressional oversight of defense, trade, and budget issues; and the use of technology in internal and external communications.

¶5. (SBU) In their meetings, U.S. representatives asked about the role of the Peruvian Congress in addressing issues of

national interest, including helping resolve conflict such as that which erupted in the Amazon region in June. Several Peruvian counterparts pointed to a legacy of centralization and a psychological mindset of relying on a strong executive to resolve problems in acknowledging Congress' limited role in this and other key areas. Peruvian legislators further pointed out that they lacked important functions and capabilities that the U.S. Congress had, most importantly the power of the purse strings. In parallel, members of the staff delegation from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and the Library of Congress held individual consultations with the Peruvian Congress' research and analysis unit and information technology department. U.S. congressional staffers described the services they provide to the U.S. Congress, and helped their counterparts prioritize activities and areas for future development.

#### Future Areas for HDAC Assistance

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¶6. (U) A number of follow-on activities are already being planned. For example, six Peruvian legislators will be invited to Washington for a multi-country mid-October training workshop on committee operations. (Post is working with HDAC to identify and extend invitations to appropriate members.) Two Peruvian staffers will be invited to Washington to participate in a December parliamentary staff institute training session focusing on legislative research. HDAC staff also discussed the possibility of providing further technical assistance in areas such as establishing a budget office, legislative research design, IT disaster recovery plans, and database design. Staff and/or former members of Congress will also potentially participate in future visits to Peru. The areas of concentration chosen will depend on the political will and interest of Peru's Congress to tackle weaknesses.

#### Comment: Legislative Relationship Can Strengthen Democracy

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¶7. (SBU) HDAC Chairman Price and his colleagues underscored the importance of the legislative branch in representing political constituencies, forging solutions to social challenges and expanding the reach of democracy. They pointed out Congress's crucial role in absorbing messages from different regions of the country, listening to different sectors of the population and reflecting these diverse

concerns back to government entities and actors in order to improve the state's responsiveness to popular needs and demands. They also highlighted the similar range of challenges faced by the U.S. Congress, including widespread skepticism reflected in low numbers for the institution as a whole in public opinion polls. (This was balanced, however, by generally high marks given most individual congressional representatives by voters in their districts.) In sum, Codel Price's central message regarding the importance of a legislative power actively engaged in the country's political, social and economic debates resonated strongly with the USG's top policy priority in Peru: strengthen democratic institutions, increase public confidence in representative government and reduce latent popular support for anti-democratic political projects.

18. (U) Codel Price cleared this message. (Septel will address HDAC Codel's meeting with President Alan Garcia.)  
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